



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
submitted to the
Judiciary Committee
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**HB 5642 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE
POLICY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

CABE is concerned about several of the additional requirements imposed upon local and regional boards of education and the State Department of Education that are proposed in this bill. Existing statutory provisions already require that boards of education adopt and implement policies and procedures concerning truancy, and outline numerous specific components that must be included in those policies and procedures. Section 11 of this bill adds the additional requirement of the implementation of a "truancy intervention model approved by the State Board of Education" for those districts with a high rate of truancy. We would caution that the required use of a "model" from a list of approved models may not be responsive to the needs of students in an individual district nor to the efforts already undertaken in each district.

Section 14 requires the State Department of Education to "develop and implement a plan for school based diversion initiatives... to be introduced into schools and school districts." There is no indication of where the resources for the implementation of these initiatives would be made available, and how they would be introduced into schools and districts. Clearly a plan for staff professional development would be a critical component of such a plan.

CABE is very concerned about the new provision in section 16, which would require that a board of education "insure" that an attorney or other advocate is appointed to represent a pupil in an expulsion hearing. This section does not contain any reference to provision for payment for such an attorney, and places an unreasonable burden on a board of education to provide an advocate in a contested proceeding. In addition, this section requires that the educational opportunity offered to expelled students under the age of 16 be "equivalent to alternative education." As alternative education is by its very nature unique to the student's needs, it will be difficult to determine equivalency and likely invite dispute.

Section 24 requires the creation of an "assessment tool" to measure the educational performance of students who transition from the juvenile justice system to a school under the jurisdiction of a local or regional board of education. In a time when we are looking closely at efforts to reduce the assessment of students, it seems unwise to require the creation of an additional assessment tool for a specific population of students. It would be more appropriate to insure that their educational progress is assessed with that of their peers.

While CABE is supportive of the efforts to reduce juvenile justice involvement and provide support to those students, we urge you to examine these specific provisions carefully and avoid placing unworkable provisions on school districts.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.